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### **Patterson introduces new Low Income Energy Assistance bill**

**LANSING** – Michigan will get a more equitable method of sustaining home energy for low income citizens under a bill introduced this week by Senator Bruce Patterson, R-Canton.

“There is no doubt that we have many Michigan citizens who need assistance with home heating in our long, bitterly cold winter season,” Patterson said. “They are not all in Detroit, but are found everywhere. Yet changes in regulations over the years have created a strange system by which only Detroit Edison’s customers are funding the entire state’s assistance program. This is wrong and it must be corrected.”

Under present regulations, only the customers of Detroit Edison wind up supporting virtually the entire cost of the Low Income Energy Efficiency Fund. This means that DTE customers in Canton or Brownstown are funding the assistance given to low income residents of Muskegon, Petoskey, Saginaw or Copper Harbor.

DTE-Gas President, Stephen Ewing, said that DTE collects \$40 million a year for the fund designed to help low-income customers pay their bills. This money is then drawn upon for the entire state, without comparable contributions from other utilities.

The Citizens for Long-term Energy Affordability and Reliability Coalition, largely backed by Edison to push for other changes to the state’s electric laws, praised the bill and its sponsor.

“The rising cost of natural gas, and the state’s high unemployment rate, are making it harder than ever for Michigan’s low-income families and seniors to pay their energy bills,” said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, speaking for CLEAR. “We are thankful Senator Patterson and the other bill co-sponsors acknowledge the need for legislation to help our neighbors who need it most.”

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Technology and Energy in the past few weeks has highlighted this inequity, as the members heard from representatives of the MPSC, Detroit Edison, and various semi-public charitable organizations.

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